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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 002120

SIPDIS

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FAA PLEASE PASS TO FOREST RAWLS III

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SUBJECT: SAFE SKIES FOR AFRICA REVIEW: DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION NIGERIA TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

REF: STATE 203125

1. (U) This Message Responds To Reftel
Request For Post's Assessment.

2. (U) Nigeria is not technically part of the Safe Skies for Africa Program (SSFA), but has received very similar assistance under a parallel program combined with port security called the Nigeria Transportation Project. The program is managed by DOT, in tandem with the SSFA program and Nigeria is considered "active" SSFA for discussion purposes. In the five years since the DOT Nigeria Transportation Project was initiated, Nigeria has made significant strides towards improving aviation and, to a lesser extent, port facilities. Prior to the Nigeria Transportation Project, aviation service between the US and Nigeria had been suspended since 1993. Port services were rendered by untrained port security personnel with no meaningful oversight from senior port authorities. Today aviation security and safety is vastly improved, with Category One status for aviation safety within Nigeria's reach. Port services, too, are improving.

3. (U) Meeting aviation goals, step by step: Aviation service in Nigeria, specifically security, was sufficiently lacking that, in 1993, the FAA suspended direct flights to the US. In large measure, thanks to the DOT Nigeria Transportation Project and aviation security technical assistance rendered by the former FAA Security, aviation security improved materially and the suspended ban was lifted in December 1999. Other aviation achievements include:

-- August 2000 open-skies agreement reached between the US and Nigeria. The agreement facilitated three direct air services between Nigeria and the United States, accomplished with wet lease arrangements and a charter service. These direct services have since failed for commercial reasons, but we anticipate Continental Airlines will begin direct service to Nigeria in early 2005. This would be the first scheduled direct service by a U.S. carrier to the African continent in more than 10 years.

-- Various technical assistance programs in the areas of aviation safety oversight, air navigation services, airport security and training capability with the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority, Nigerian Airspace Management Agency, Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria, and the Nigerian College of Aviation Technology.

-- Purchasing and installation of security screening equipment worth more than \$2.5 million for Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt and Abuja airports. In addition training was provided to some 120 screeners.

4. (U) Progress at the ports: Nigerian ports are of international importance, and a portion of the world's oil security depends on their accessibility. The DOT Nigeria Transportation Project helps to ensure progress in security, stability and liberalization at the ports. Thus far, achievements include:

-- Full port security and environmental assessment,
-- Training courses for more than 150 Nigerian Port Authority personnel,
-- Seminar on oversight and anti-corruption for Ministries of Transportation and Aviation.

5. (U) Project Results: Aviation infrastructure, safety and security in Nigeria are greatly enhanced as a direct result of the USAID/DOT-funded Nigeria Transportation Project. Missions led by the Office of the Secretary, as well as FAA visits and TSA inspections, have generated favorable reports of Nigeria's strides in these areas.

6. (U) The DOT Nigeria Transportation Project plays a critical role in helping to secure US-Nigerian trade in petroleum. Further improvements in access to Nigeria's exit and entry points would improve Nigeria's trading prospects and help make Nigerian goods more competitive

on the world market. These upgrades would also make Nigeria a more attractive market for U.S. business and investment. Mission looks forward to continued collaboration with the Department of Transportation on these important endeavors. We hope to discuss areas of future cooperation at the October 25-29 Safe Skies for Africa Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa.

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